



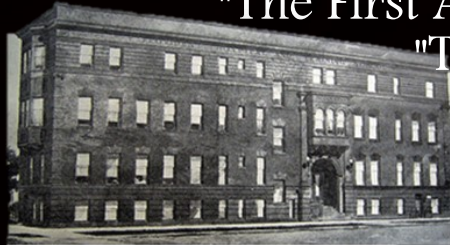
The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Provident Hospital (Est. January 22, 1891)

"The First African-American Owned and Operated Hospital"
"The First Open Heart Surgery Performed in the US"



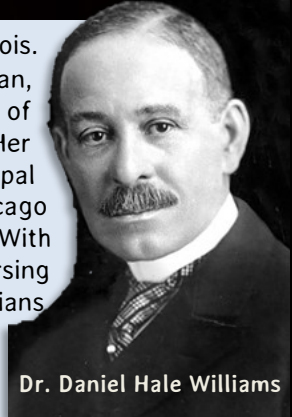
Provident Hospital, Chicago
1896



Provident Hospital was established in 1891, in Chicago, Illinois.

Two years earlier, Emma Reynolds, a young African-American woman, who aspired to be a nurse, was denied admission by all of Chicago's nursing schools on the grounds that she was black. Her brother, the pastor of St. Stephen's African Methodist Episcopal Church, approached Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, a respected black Chicago surgeon, for assistance in influencing the white schools for her admission. With no success, Dr. Williams, along with Pastor Reynolds, decided to open their own nursing school. In 1890, the pastor and doctor met with other black ministers and physicians along with white and black businessmen in the area to discuss opening a nurse-training facility and hospital. At the time, there were only a few black physicians in Chicago and they had limited or no hospital privileges. The community leaders pledged their support and a large-scale fund-raising campaign began. One of the first and largest contributions came in 1890 when clergyman Reverend Jones secured a commitment from the Armour Meat Packing Company for the down payment on a three-story brick house at 29th and Dearborn. This building, with only 12 beds, became the first Provident Hospital.

Although the initial operation of the hospital was based on financial contributions, the daily functions relied on a strong, supportive, volunteer community. Local black residents, public officials, church leaders, and civic leaders all showed up to help and were critical to the daily operation of the hospital. In 1891, a board of trustees, an executive committee, and a finance committee were named, along with a community advisory and women's auxiliary board. Next, legal papers were prepared for the "Provident Hospital and Training School Association" and the charter stated: "The object for which it is formed is to maintain a hospital and training school for nurses in the City of Chicago, Illinois, for the gratuitous treatment of the medical and surgical diseases of the sick poor."



Dr. Daniel Hale Williams



TRUSTEE BOARD OF PROVIDENT HOSPITAL



The hospital officially opened on January 22, 1891 as Provident Hospital and Training School, with an annual budget of \$5,429. By 1892, seven women, including Emma Reynolds, had enrolled in the first nursing class. The first physician in surgical training, Dr. Austin Curtis, received two years of instruction under Dr. Williams, from 1891 through 1893. Dr. Curtis later became the first black surgeon-in-chief at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C.



Emma Reynolds

In the summer of 1893, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, the founding Doctor of Provident Hospital, performed the nation's first open-heart surgery. This operation, without X-rays, antibiotics, surgical prep-work or tools of modern surgery, placed both Dr. Williams and Provident Hospital in the medical history books. His patient, James Cornish, survived and was discharged just 51 days after his historic surgery.

As demand for medical care in the area grew, so did Provident hospital. In 1896, a funding campaign raised sufficient capital to construct a new building on donated land at 36th and Dearborn. The effort was promoted by abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who gave a public lecture and presented a donation to Dr. Williams at the hospital site. By 1897, Provident Hospital had 189 inpatients, and the outpatient clinic, the Armour Dispensary, treated approximately 6,000 patients.

In 1933, the Provident Hospital merged with the University of Chicago in an educational agreement which moved it once more to E. 51st Street. In the coming years, Provident would suffer two major financial setbacks, and the financial struggles caused it to close its doors in 1987. Provident Hospital of Cook County opened on August 17, 1993 as a public, community teaching hospital, and part of the Cook County hospital network.